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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001965

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT STAFF FOR LTGEN SELVA

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SUBJECT: DISAPPOINTMENT WITH RESULTS OF "JENIN PLAN" ON THE GROUND

REF: JERUSALEM 1933

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary. Eighteen months after the launch of the "Jenin Plan," local officials express a sense of pride in their own efforts, a mixed sense of economic improvements, and strong criticism of what they consider the GOI's failure to facilitate the plan. Governor Qadora Mousa and key security chiefs claim that IDF behavior on the ground has not changed, despite what they describe as improvements in PA security performance. They also strongly criticize efforts to portray the PA security forces (PASF) as "Israel's guards," and described the PASF's performance as unsustainable in the long term without a change in the GOI's approach. Economic assessments are mixed. On the positive side, Jenin businessmen cite an improvement in legal protection for businesses and an increase in Israeli Arab-driven commerce. However, local government officials lament shuttered shops and unemployment rates higher than in Gaza, and local villagers complain about their inability to obtain permits to harvest crops on the other side of the separation barrier. End Summary.

The "Jenin Model"

¶2. (C) In October 14 meetings with Polchief in Jenin, local officials expressed pride in their recent accomplishments, but a sense of disappointment with Israeli and international support for the "Jenin Plan." The plan, which was launched in April 2008, envisioned deployment of PASF to the city as part of a coordinated strategy of security and economic improvements, relaxed movement and access restrictions, and increased PA security control. "Jenin was supposed to be the model for the rest of the West Bank," said Jenin Governor Qadora Mousa, "to restore security and launch economic revival projects. We did our part. But Israel did not give us anything in return. Incursions, arrests, and home demolitions continue as if nothing happened. Nothing at this level has changed."

Local Commanders: Why Does Improved PA Security Performance Not Lead IDF To Change Its Behavior?

¶3. (C) National Security Forces (NSF) Area Commander Radi Asideh expressed his appreciation for USG-funded training, and pride in what his forces have accomplished in their campaign to re-establish law and order. He then asked rhetorically, "why have improvements in PA security performance not led to a change in IDF behavior on the ground?" For example, he said, the IDF had never responded to a PASF request to gradually deploy to six villages around

Jenin. Asideh continued, "(the IDF) has not given Palestinian forces permission to patrol after midnight. But PA security operations cannot be stopped for six hours every night." He added, "Israel accuses us of not arresting criminals. But when the PASF asked to have permits for handguns, at least for the security chiefs who commute back and forth to Jenin, nothing happened, he claimed. Asideh also asserted that the IDF had denied permission for PASF to deploy along President Abbas' motorcade route the day before.

Frustration Over Being Cast As "Israel's Guards"

¶4. (C) Jenin Preventive Security Organization (PSO) Chief Ibrahim Ramadan discussed what he described as a growing frustration among the PASF that they are viewed as "Israel's guards." He recounted that an IDF soldier at a checkpoint had recently thanked him for his role in "guarding" Israel. "Guarding them! We are security for our own people, not for them. The U.S. taught us to preserve the security of our people. For how long will they continue to use us and treat us as their guards?" He continued, "for the past two years, the question has been whether the (PA) security services have been able to combat terrorism. If the answer is yes, why has there been no change in IDF (rules of engagement) on the ground?" he asked.

¶5. (C) "The Palestinian people cannot continue like this," Ramadan asserted. "If this continues for another year or two, we will not be able to control our own people." Jenin Civil Police Chief Yousef Uzraeil concurred, saying that

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while he was confident of the PA's ability to maintain security if Israeli incursions cease, the status quo is unsustainable. "Our role is not to protect the IDF and Israel," he said. "Our job is to build and protect our own society. This logic is absurd - they are pushing us towards violence."

Jenin's Economic Recovery Depends On
Worker Permits, Access to Land

¶6. (C) The Governor described economic conditions in Jenin, noting that unemployment in the city stood at nearly 60 percent, more than in Gaza. Fifteen to twenty percent of the labor force works in Israel - many illegally - in trash collection and agriculture. Prior to the Second Intifada, he noted, Jenin's economy had depended in large part on wages from workers in Israel, but the GOI now issues only 2,000 work permits for Jenin's 250,000 residents. "Our Ministry of Education just announced 17 jobs," said Mousa, "and 1,750 graduates applied." Pointing out his office window at a street lined with closed automobile repair garages, Mousa said, "each of those (garages) used to employ six people, and 500 or more of them are still closed." He claimed that nearly a thousand offices are vacant, and, as a result, the value of commercial real estate in Jenin had dropped significantly.

¶7. (C) In separate meetings with ConGenOffs later that week, businessmen from Al Marah, the second largest company in Jenin, were more upbeat, noting that improved security, rule of law, and stability had directly benefited their business. "We can go to court for breaches of contract and people that don't pay their bills. We couldn't do that in the past," said General Manager Ghassan Jabaren. Representatives from the nearby villages of 'Anin, Zububa, and Rumana echoed Governor Mousa in blaming Israeli restrictions on movement and access for Jenin's continued economic woes, noting that the number of permits for farmers to work their land in the "seam zone" (West Bank land located between the "Green Line" and the separation barrier) or on the other side of the separation barrier had decreased

substantially.

¶18. (SBU) In the village of 'Anin, where nearly half of the village's cultivated land lay behind the barrier, only 400 permits were issued in 2009, down from 1,600 in 2008. Villagers added that many of the permits were restricted to the olive harvest season, but argued that farmers needed improved access throughout the year to care for other crops as well. Finally, a contact at the Jenin Chamber of Commerce described a generally bad economic situation, noting that the Jenin Plan had unfortunately coincided with the global economic downturn. He was hopeful that the opening of the Jalameh Crossing (reftel) could improve Israeli Arabs' access to Jenin.

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